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New Rogue Valley Chorale's Second Concert

Greeted With Enthusiasm

By OLIVE STARCHER

Mail Tribune Special Writer

Choral singing has had a mixed history here in the Rogue Valley.

Schools, of course, usually have choruses as part of the music program and in addition various musicians have organized and directed choral groups. These would be on the

scene for a time and then die out.

But the time seems to be just right for choral music to come to the forefront once more here and there is at hand a choral

director capable of leading the way. Last fall Lynn Sjolund, who has for many years directed Medford Senior High School choruses and choirs and produced musicals, and who has been otherwise active in music circles, announced he

was organizing a choral group. Auditions were held, singers chosen and rehearsals started.

Ample Audience

The group gave its second concert last night at Medford Senior High School Auditorium for an ample audience and the opinion expressed on all sides was more than favorable — it was enthusiastic. This new chorus, called Rogue Valley Chorale, is very, very good indeed. Every singer is a well-trained musician and some have exceptionally fine voices.

The program given last night was no ordinary one, and it was enhanced by a unique guest soloist, Philip Frohnmayer, believed by some to be the most outstanding musician ever produced by the Medford public school system and known to many in the audience.

A Haydn mass, "Missa Sancti Bernardi de Offida," or "Heiligmesse," opened the program. This truly monumental work, which requires some 40 minutes to perform all six portions, is a difficult and glorious composition and it was sung superbly last night. The color and the richness of the blended voices, so skillfully directed by Mr. Sjolund, resulted in really exquisite sound. This Haydn Mass had never been presented in Medford before as far as can be recalled.

Mass Soloists

Soloists for the Mass were Karen Paschke, Doris Sjolund, Carroll Graber, Ronald Hollensted, Grants Pass, Marvie Lawrence, and Dick Swanson. Mr. Graber is also assistant director and section leaders are Keith Campbell, Phoenix, Mrs. Hollensted, Billie Phillips and Mrs. Sjolund.

Of considerable contrast was the music which followed. The conductor had chosen another

extremely difficult composition, "The Lamentation of Jeremiah" by Alberto Ginastera. The program contained the text and as one read the grim, sorrowful words — it is a lament in the deepest sense — one realized that no ordinary piece of music could express these words.

Again the conductor and singers explored, with artistry and emotion, the depth and meaning of a fine piece of music. This unharmonious Ginastera music is not to be enjoyed lightly. It's impact is almost one of discomfort to some listeners.

Ravel Songs

Philip Frohnmayer charmed his audience with a group of really delightful Ravel songs called "Histoires Naturelles." These French songs, also never performed here before, sing of a peacock, a cricket, a swan and other birds, and are most appealing. Audience members had been supplied with the French text, plus the English translation immediately below each line, and the soloist urged everyone to read as he sang. Almost everyone did.

This reporter does not pretend to more than a slight knowledge of French, but this we do know, Philip Frohnmayer's vocal diction is a joy to hear, his voice is rich and velvet smooth and his musicianship impeccable. His part of the program was a great success, and adding to the pleasure was the fact that his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Otto Frohnmayer, widely known in Medford and in Oregon, were in the audience. Mrs. Frohnmayer as well as two older sons and a daughter, are all musicians and the entire family has been an important part of the musical life of the area for many years.

Philip's education was pursued both here and in Europe and he is now on the faculty of Humboldt State University in Arcata, Calif.

Excellent Accompanists

Two excellent accompanists added greatly to the musical evening. Signe Lusk, also raised and educated in Medford, is accompanist for the Chorale. Mr. Frohnmayer was accompanied last night by Janet Parlova of Humboldt University.

For encores Mr. Frohnmayer sang two Greek folk songs arranged by Ravel.

Norman Dello Joio's "Song of the Open Road," described as a choral proclamation for mixed voices, was the final programmed number. This brisk and lively piece, really more difficult to perform than one might think, has woven into it both piano and trumpet solo passages and last night Miss Lusk was at the piano and Polly Fairfield of Southern Oregon College performed well on the trumpet.

Responding to warm applause, the Chorale sang "Choral Scherzo," popularly

known as "Listen to the Mocking Bird" and a Brahms Gypsy song, "To The Dance."

Group Is Needed

It is to be hoped that this choral group, so well launched, will continue to fill a niche in the music community, that it will grow and develop. There is every reason to believe that it will.

Director Sjolund said last night "It has not been generally recognized how much vocal talent there is in this area. There are many truly fine singers here, some of them newcomers, and now it is just a question of hard work and rehearsals." The Chorale is fortunate to have Lynn Sjolund as its director for he has a broad education and background in music, is dedicated and is not afraid of hard work, as his accomplishments here prove.

The concert last night was followed by a reception at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Collins on Dellwood Avenue. Mrs. Collins is a member of the chorale board of directors. Mrs. Frohnmayer is president, and Sam Harbison is vice president.